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REDEFINING MAINE: GRADE 3 MAINE STUDIES CURRICULAR UNIT

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by

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for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching.

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DEDICATION

To the Wabanaki peoples of current-day Maine,
no words are adequate to renounce the intergenerational trauma
you've experienced in your homeland
at the hands of colonizers and their worldview.
My hope is that this work helps to honor the fullest truth
of your legacy as the original and ongoing caretakers of this place.

To my parents, Bill and Cristie,
thank you for your unwavering support in all of my educational endeavors.
You have served as a great inspiration for the power of
education for social change.

To all of the educators who have played a part in my own education,
thank you for your expertise, passion, and encouragement!

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Capstone Question

In partial fulfillment of my Master of Arts in Teaching, I was provided with the opportunity to pursue a question of professional interest by researching and developing a curricular unit for use in the classroom. My guiding capstone question asked, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* The purpose of this project was to create and share a Maine Studies curricular unit for Grade 3 students to increase knowledge about and integration of the Wabanaki peoples who are native to this colonized place. Creating a Social Studies unit focused on both knowledge and inclusion of the people native to current-day Maine was intended to provide students with the opportunity to develop both content knowledge and civic competencies, thus fulfilling the true potential of Social Studies as a transformative force for change within a democratic society.

This introductory chapter seeks to establish a foundation and purpose for the curricular unit itself. I have introduced this topic by stating the research question and the purpose that guided the development of the project. In the following sections, I examine the essential goals of Social Studies in American public education: to cultivate the development of content knowledge as well as essential values for meaningful participation in society. I share the observations that have inspired and informed my capstone question and serve to establish a purpose and a meaningful context for this project. I reflect on the origins of my personal and professional interest in and commitment to this place and people, this topic, and the larger mission of Social Studies

instruction. Finally, the introductory chapter concludes with a summary and overview of the following chapters.

Rationale: Identifying a Need

Though it is often relegated to the margins of American public education, Social Studies is one of the most interesting and engaging subject areas for students because it feels real and relevant to their daily lives. Strong Social Studies instruction provides students with opportunities to learn about their world through different ways of knowing in many disciplines, from history, economics, government, citizenship, geography, and culture, to science and technology in society. Yet Social Studies also goes beyond these academic content areas because it has a larger mission: to actively promote what the National Council of the Social Studies refers to as *civic competence*, or the development of lifelong values, dispositions, and skills that are expected for effective, lifelong participation in a pluralistic, democratic modern society (2010).

By engaging students on multiple levels, high-quality Social Studies instruction encourages students to construct their own understanding of what it means to be an individual living in the context of a given community in a particular time and place. Further still, Social Studies instruction builds meaning by exposing students to a wide variety of people, places, ideas, and values that help illuminate and enhance their own individual experience, thus providing an opportunity to compare, contrast, and synthesize new understandings about the fascinating nuances of our shared human experience in our local community and in the world at large. Seeking to understand the full story of a place and its peoples allows them to collectively cultivate the skills they need to construct a more equitable and inclusive society.

Researchers and policymakers alike agree that it is critical for all students to have access to high-quality Social Studies instruction in order to acquire knowledge as well as democratic dispositions and skills for effective participation in society (Parker, 2012). Yet Social Studies instruction takes on even more critical importance in postcolonial contexts such as mine where current-day life has only been made possible by the exploitation, genocide, and forced assimilation of Native peoples by White European colonists and their descendants. This specific context describes my own time and place as an educator: the current-day state of Maine.

The land that is now the state of Maine was first inhabited as long as 12,000 years ago (Wabanaki Studies Commission, 2003). The Wabanaki, or *People of the Dawnland*, are indigenous to northern New England and the Canadian Maritimes. After thousands of years of cultural and technological advancement in this land, the Wabanaki had developed a set of practices that were closely adapted to the unique demands of the local environment and included seasonal migration for various food sources throughout the year and extensive travel in birchbark canoes (Androscoggin River Portal, 2015). When faced with confrontations with European colonists, the Wabanaki peoples were forced to make a choice: "adapt and survive, or resist and perish" (Abbe Museum, 2020, para. 4). Centuries of capitalist resource extraction and increased European settlement followed, particularly in the lumber, farming, and fishing industries, as symbolized on the Maine state flag: two White men, one dressed as a farmer and one as a sailor, with a soon-to-be-cut-down tree between them.

Now, in the year 2020, Maine is celebrating two hundred years of statehood. The demographics of this land have shifted significantly. Today, the Wabanaki Nations are

recognized by the Maine state government as four official tribes: Micmacs, the Maliseets, the Passamaquoddies, and the Penobscots (Abbe Museum, 2020). Most Native people live on designated tribal lands, but others live in other parts of the state, including urban areas (Abbe Museum, 2020). The state population is now about 1.3 million people, approximately 95% of whom are White and only 0.7% Native American (US Census Bureau, 2019). Though the Wabanaki Nations chose to resist, adapt, and survive, it has been a difficult and often lonely road.

Many of Maine's non-Native inhabitants have very little awareness of the Wabanaki Nations' 12,000-year history in this place (Wabanaki Studies Commission, 2003). One example is that many Maine place names originally come from Wabanaki languages and contain a significant amount of information describing the historical relationship of people to that place, often referring to important seasonal natural resources (Androscoggin River Portal, 2015). For example, in the name of Sebago Lake, Maine's second-largest lake, Sebago means "big still water" (Androscoggin River Portal, 2015, para. 6). In contrast, English names for towns built by colonizers more often served to honor White male founders or were named after towns in Europe (Androscoggin River Portal, 2015). The White colonizer impulse to rename and rewrite the landscape while overlooking Native histories and funds of knowledge makes indigenous influence in current-day Maine more invisible.

The overwhelming lack of awareness about Wabanaki peoples can also be seen in the discourse of the Maine state government. The history section of the state government website includes a section titled "Maine Native American History" that includes links to only three of the four current-day tribal government websites, completely omitting the

Aroostook Band of Micmacs (Maine State Government, 2020). This serves to historicize the current-day peoples but also completely erases one of the nations. If accurate inclusion of indigenous peoples in this colonized place were more of a priority, it would be obvious through greater visibility and increased access to information at the state level. These choices made about how to present the history of the state might seem insignificant, but they hold power and send a message that Wabanaki peoples are not valued because they are not visible.

The town where I teach Grade 3, Lewiston, is also a place where Wabanaki peoples and their contributions are rendered practically invisible. Though the town does not have a large Wabanaki population, the way that local history is presented frequently serves to completely ignore the historical and continued colonization of this place. The City of Lewiston website includes a historical overview titled "A Brief History of Lewiston" that describes a Boston-based land company that "granted" land above the Androscoggin River to two men in 1768 so that they could "settle fifty families" (City of Lewiston, 2020, para. 1). While one reader might understand these people as innocent settlers who happened to be given free land in order to establish a political presence in an economically valuable location, another reader could interpret them as White colonizers trying to justify seizure of Wabanaki lands. This is just one small example of the way that indigenous peoples are too often written out of the story of a place through omission as well as White-washing, which lead to inaccurate narratives but also reinforce racist, exclusionary policies towards Native American populations. I believe there is significant opportunity for improving both the knowledge about and attitudes toward Wabanaki

peoples by the state's majority White population so that the story of this place fully reflects the realities of all of its peoples in a more inclusive, integrative way.

Perhaps more insidious and troubling than the Eurocentric place names and discourse that contribute to the invisibility of Wabanaki peoples in Maine is the general lack of respect and inclusion that I have encountered in everyday conversations with fellow White residents. To be fair, these attitudes are not necessarily intended to exclude Native American peoples in particular, but they are very likely intended to reinforce the notion of White supremacy by actively dehumanizing and minoritizing anyone who does not pass as White. I intentionally use the term *minoritize* as a verb to reflect how minority status in this context is actively socially constructed, not an inherent demographic truth, as explained by Stewart (2013).

The recent influx of African immigrants and refugees in larger towns like Portland and Lewiston has often been met with very strong dissent and discomfort, and sometimes even violence. I have heard White people discussing whether or not someone counts as a *true Mainer*, and the qualification is only ever extended to a fellow White person whose family has been here for multiple generations, but never to an indigenous person, and definitely not to other People of Color. I have even witnessed overtly negative race-based comments about students in private conversations with White colleagues who seem to feel they are in a safe space to air their frustrations. This leads me to conclude that indigenous and People of Color in Maine are often ignored but worse than that, intentionally excluded and mistreated on an interpersonal level as well as an institutional level. We must demonstrate value for the original caretakers of this place by working towards not just inclusion, which maintains Whiteness at its center, but

integration, or a reimagined form of social reconstruction that recenters indigeneity rather than continuing to treat Native communities as the Other, as written about by Calderón (2014). A Maine Studies curricular unit for Grade 3 can serve as a tool to help all students build knowledge and also develop more integrative attitudes towards their neighbors, regardless of racial or cultural background.

Thankfully, there has been notable legislative progress in the current-day state of Maine to address the issues I've identified. In 2001, tribal representative Donna Loring spearheaded a Maine state law known as LD291, or "An Act to Require Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine's Schools" (Sockbeson, 2019). This law requires teachers at all grade levels K-12 to teach about Maine Native American history and cultures. Yet two decades years later, significant challenges continue to prevent the full realization of this mandate. Sockbeson (2019) highlights the historical context of Wabanaki-colonizer relations, the need for increased teacher preparation and compliance, and lack of funding in many areas including a commission to oversee the implementation of the law and support for Native students attending the University of Maine.

As a new teacher from out of state who was faced with complying with this law, I would agree that lack of preparation and ongoing accountability are major obstacles. I would also add that lack of curricular materials was a significant impediment to my ability to follow through in fulfilling my responsibilities as they pertain to this law. There are many curricular materials available online, some of which were created by Wabanaki tribal authorities or community members, but there is no comprehensive unit tied to a particular grade level that someone like me could pick up and implement in a

straightforward way. During my first year of teaching, I knew that I was required to teach about Maine Native Americans, but I often felt overwhelmed, unsupported, and apprehensive about making insensitive or misinformed mistakes. I felt inspired to create the curricular unit that I wished I could have been given.

Finally, this project to promote knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine was also inspired by the state of Social Studies instruction in my district, in general. High-poverty urban districts like mine in Lewiston, Maine, often place a stronger emphasis on literacy and math skills than on Social Studies, Science, and the Arts. Social Studies is difficult to assess and is not often utilized as a measure of student or school success, so it tends to have lower priority for instructional time. Accordingly, teachers in our district do not receive significant curricular support for teaching Social Studies beyond an online link to the state standards document. Because of the lack of rigor and dedicated teaching time for elementary Social Studies, my students were much farther behind grade level than I would have expected in this subject area. They had very little knowledge about their Wabanaki neighbors across the state of Maine, but I was also heartened by their interest in learning more. My students who are Black and People of Color, in particular, expressed genuine curiosity to learn about indigenous peoples across the world in general and seemed disposed to show solidarity with the struggles of displaced, dispossessed peoples. These attitudes are a huge asset and source of inspiration for an educator like me to build upon through this project.

Perhaps I have painted my new home with a broad brush. Perhaps the actual reality of the situation is not quite as negative as I have made it out to be. But I cannot, in good conscience, teach the Maine Social Studies standards for my Grade 3 students

without a full commitment to promoting knowledge about and integration of the Wabanaki peoples who survived and thrived despite the horrendous abuses of colonization, and who continue to live in this special place that we are so privileged to call home. Maine simply would not be the place it is today without the historical and continued contributions of Wabanaki peoples. I am just one individual guided by the life experiences I have been exposed to in my own unique cultural context, but these have inspired me to work to make a positive change as an educator in my new community.

Context: Personal and Professional Motivations

Years before arriving in Maine, my career as an educator passionate about Social Studies was a long time in the making. I am a White woman from an upper-middle class family who was raised in Evanston, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. My informal Social Studies education began even before I started school because I was provided with many supportive opportunities to learn about and actively participate in my community. My mother's work as a Religious Studies professor and my father's work as a Lutheran minister both provided opportunities for me to build meaningful relationships with people of all ages from racial backgrounds that were very different from my own. They both worked for institutions that historically have exclusively been led by and served White people, but were making intentional strides towards greater inclusion of and service to people of different racial backgrounds. Though I did not have words for these concepts at the time, these foundational years cultivated in me a strong belief in the values of equity and inclusion for all people, regardless of background, because my relationships with people outside of my household mattered. I knew that every human deserved the same dignity, respect, love, and wellbeing.

These powerful experiences were reinforced by my formal education in the public school setting. Social Studies soon became my favorite subject area because it was so incredibly interesting and engaging in ways that constantly piqued my curiosity to learn. It expanded the boundaries of space and time even further beyond the immediate world of my childhood to learn about people and places whose realities were very different from my own, which challenged me to question what I thought of as *normal*. This in turn helped me better understand and develop my own identity as an individual, as a family member, and as a local community member. It also challenged me as a sometimes reluctant American citizen, becoming increasingly aware of my own White privilege in contrast to the horrific injustices and inequalities suffered by people of color in a country that so often claimed to be exceptional in offering liberty and justice to all. Social Studies was the place that helped me feel most at home as a student: my questions were welcomed, the learning was never done, and it felt real and relevant to my experiences in a diverse community.

Besides my informal and formal Social Studies educational experiences, an additional influence guiding me toward the field of education was my family legacy of a strong commitment to education for social change. When I was in elementary school, my parents were appalled by the de facto segregation of the English Language Learner classes in our district and wanted to promote more equitable educational opportunities for all students, regardless of racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic background. They worked with a diverse group of parents to help start a Spanish Dual Immersion program in the local public schools to help promote academic success and integration for all students. Another inspiration was my aunt, who was elected as school

board president and led numerous efforts to ensure a high-quality education for all students, serving her local community even while dying from terminal pancreatic cancer. My grandfather utilized his role as president of a small liberal arts college to break down barriers that had previously separated the institution from the surrounding working-class neighborhood and promote educational opportunities for people of all backgrounds. The more I learned about these initiatives led by my family members, the more I felt inspired to continue their work to promote equity and improved quality of life for all people in American society, regardless of background.

To pursue my goal of becoming an educator who could contribute toward building a more equitable society, much of my undergraduate work was geared towards what I was certain would be a career as a Spanish Dual Immersion teacher. I studied abroad for a semester in Cusco, Peru, because I wanted to learn about the benefits and challenges of life for minoritized indigenous populations in a bilingual, intercultural postcolonial context. I wrote an honors thesis about competing discourses regarding goals and outcomes for language majority and language minority populations of students within the field of bilingual education in St. Paul, Minnesota. I aspired to teach in a Spanish Dual Immersion program that would promote self-confidence, positive self-concept, and academic achievement for both native Spanish and native English speakers. I was inspired by my parents' work to start the Dual Immersion program in my hometown and felt driven by a genuine curiosity in the ways cross-cultural communication and education had the potential to promote social change and build a more inclusive society.

As excited as I was to start a career in the field of education, I also felt that something was missing in my personal life. I loved growing up in a diverse urban community, but I also felt that Chicago was so human-centric that I lacked meaningful connection to my physical environment. I wanted additional opportunities to stretch my legs, gain more privacy and space, and live a sustainable and healthy lifestyle without getting caught up in a competitive urban job market. I also hoped to connect more closely and more often with nature in order to establish a more holistic harmony between different elements of my life. Much of my desire to connect more deeply with and build a stronger appreciation for the local environment was probably inspired by my own feelings of rootlessness. My parents had moved to the Chicago area as adults and we had no family nearby, so I lacked a sense of personal history or meaningful connection to the place where I grew up. Deep down, my passion for social change combined with my desire to learn more about how to live a life more closely adapted to the local environment, which drove my growing interest in learning about the experiences of indigenous peoples around the world.

My prospective career plans shifted as I explored the possibility of life in a more rural context while still pursuing meaningful work as an educator passionate about social change. I first moved to Homer, Alaska, where I was thrilled to teach Alaska Studies to my second and third grade students as well as *live* Alaska Studies in my attempts to create a home there by learning about and connecting with the people, plants, and animals that made the place so unique. Ironically, I lived in a majority White community where it required significant effort to learn about Alaska Native peoples, history, and culture, even though there were Alaska Native villages as close as a few miles across the bay.

Ultimately, a number of complicating factors, from political forces to personal preferences, caused me to seek a more sustainable place to call home that would offer similar outdoor opportunities and lifestyle choices. Lewiston, Maine, became my new home because I would have the opportunity to work with a diverse population of students while living a more rural lifestyle more closely connected with the natural environment.

Thanks to the depth of the Social Studies discipline and the many powerful learning opportunities I have experienced, I have learned that my personal and professional motivations inform each other in a complex, interwoven feedback loop of identity, beliefs, and values. The professional can never be fully separated from the personal. Like many teachers, I entered this profession wanting to make a difference by helping students learn and grow in their individual capacities. But I also wanted to pursue the larger goal of constructing a more equitable, inclusive, and truly integrative society for and with students in which everyone is able to feel truly *at home* in the way they relate to both people and place. After all these years of moving and trying to find the right environment to help me grow and thrive as an individual, I am lucky to call Lewiston, Maine, my new home.

I see this project as a powerful opportunity to grow as an educator and as a community member while encouraging my students to find meaning and promote reimagined integration for all people who consider this state their home today. As a White educator, I envision working collaboratively to build an inclusive, integrated society that dismantles the unequal power structures that lead to overwhelmingly negative outcomes for marginalized peoples and instead fosters cultural resilience, values multiple perspectives, and promotes shared resources and holistic wellbeing for all

people. All members of this society can benefit from developing an appreciation for its original and current caretakers and taking the time to cultivate knowledge as well as more inclusive attitudes, demonstrating value for Maine Native peoples as well as their histories and traditions. My intention is that, through use in Grade 3 classrooms here in Maine, this Maine Studies curricular unit will change attitudes in our majority White community by helping to promote deeper knowledge and genuine inclusion and integration of Maine Native peoples, cultures, and histories. After centuries of oppression and erasure, the Wabanaki deserve nothing less.

Summary and Overview

This introductory chapter established the context for this project's essential question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* I established a rationale for this project to develop a Maine Studies curricular unit and identified a need for high-quality Social Studies education that promotes social change through development of content knowledge and civic competence. Though Maine is not exceptional in its need for increased inclusion and integration of indigenous peoples, the current state of racist invisibilization is not excusable. Finally, I grounded the foundation of this project in my own personal and professional experiences in the field of education that have informed my passion for Social Studies in particular.

In Chapter Two, I present the results of a literature review undertaken in order to learn from others' scholarship and wisdom related to this topic. In my review of the research literature, I focus on three areas that work together to inform and support the

development of a well-rounded, comprehensive curricular unit: elementary Social Studies instruction; multicultural education goals and approaches; and American Indian/Alaska Native education. Chapter Three contains a project description, including the choice of the curriculum design frameworks used for this project. Chapter Four concludes with a vision for the results of project implementation and an exploration of directions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In this section, I review the literature on elementary Social Studies education, multicultural education, and American Indian/Alaska Native education in order to gain insight into the research question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* The purpose of this chapter is to better understand how elementary Social Studies education and multicultural educational approaches influence student learning outcomes with respect to academic competency, as well as civic competencies such as valuing equity and inclusion within a democratic society. This chapter also explores the ways that Social Studies instruction and multicultural educational approaches such as Culturally Responsive Teaching and Culture-Based Education have been utilized to better address

the unique educational needs of minoritized students in general, and indigenous students in particular. This review of the literature presents, analyzes, and synthesizes the wisdom that already exists within the field to establish a theoretical foundation for a Social Studies curricular unit that successfully promotes academic achievement for all students in mastering content knowledge while also promoting the larger goal of developing civic competence for greater integration of Wabanaki peoples in current-day Maine.

Social Studies Education

In this section, the literature on elementary Social Studies education is reviewed. The section begins with an investigation of the educational objectives and intended outcomes of Social Studies as a unique academic discipline. Next, challenges and limitations that Social Studies education has faced in recent years are analyzed. Finally, the section highlights various methods recommended for effective Social Studies instruction in American public education at the elementary level. These topics inform the capstone question because they promote deeper understanding of how to develop rigorous and meaningful elementary Social Studies content and pedagogy, thus assisting in the design of a curricular unit with enough integrity to survive and thrive within a challenging educational landscape.

Objectives of Social Studies Education

Social Studies is a unique subject area for multiple reasons. Historically speaking, Social Studies was, of course, the basis of the curriculum in all communities across the world because it is the basis of human life (McGuire, 2007). Social Studies contains unique content that crosses many different disciplines, each with its own ways of

knowing, producing, and transmitting knowledge about the human experience in the world. Parker (2012) defined the content goals of elementary Social Studies as developing social understanding, or knowledge about people and places both near and far. Social Studies education is intended to help students develop a sense of identity and meaning while gradually exploring broader horizons of the social and physical worlds they inhabit (Parker, 2012).

The landscape of how this is achieved in American elementary education is hugely varied. Unlike the collaboratively-created Common Core English Language Arts and Math standards, there are no national Social Studies standards. Yet the National Council for the Social Studies (2019) supported Social Studies education by creating ten themes to help organize the many areas of content knowledge within the discipline: Culture; Time, Continuity, and Change; People, Places, and Environments; Individual Development and Identity; Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; Power, Authority, and Governance; Production, Distribution, and Consumption; Science, Technology, and Society; Global Connections; and Civic Ideals and Practices. With respect to the capstone question, it is quite common for state and district Social Studies standards to promote learning about the local community in younger grades, then advance to learning about the state in connection with the rest of the country in older grades when students are more comfortable with abstract concepts and greater distance in time and space (Parker, 2012).

Besides promoting social understanding through content knowledge, Social Studies also has a larger civic mission: preparing students for democratic citizenship. This takes on particular importance in Social Studies at the elementary level because students begin to develop social responsibility and an interest in politics before the age of

nine (McGuire, 2007). Parker (2012) defined this twin goal of Social Studies as developing student capacity for civic efficacy, or the knowledge, attitudes, and values, and skills students will need for full and effective participation in American democratic society.

In modern-day democratic societies, Social Studies education both explicitly and implicitly plays a critical role in national projects to construct society and create a shared identity. Compared to countries like the UK or the former Soviet Union, American Social Studies education (and history instruction, in particular) is intended to help produce and maintain a pluralistic national identity for the common good (Fitchett & Heafner, 2017). Huck (2018) asserted that Social Studies instruction is essential for creating a democratic society because it results in active citizens who participate and engage because they know their history and their rights.

The development of civic competence is central to the mission of elementary Social Studies education. Students who actually know about the community feel more motivated to take action to participate and contribute towards improving the community (Huck, 2018). Hinde (2005) pointed out that the purpose of students learning to read and write is to actually be able to do something productive with those skills within the societal context. At its best, Social Studies education advances beyond teaching superficial facts to empower students who can participate in democratic society by collaboratively solving problems with civility (McGuire, 2007). Students live nested lives as an individual within the home, the classroom, the school, the community, the state, the country, and the world, so Social Studies education supports student knowledge and engagement within and across all levels of the human experience (Parker, 2012).

Marginalization and Opportunities for Integration

Researchers tend to agree that Social Studies instruction at the elementary classroom has become marginalized within the past two decades. Hinde (2005) argued that Social Studies as education for citizenship has minor importance in comparison with Math and Reading. Instructional time has dropped significantly, especially in elementary schools with a mostly minoritized student population (Hinde, 2005). Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Serriere, and Stewart (2008) argued that the No Child Left Behind Legislation of 2001 and the subsequent emphasis on Reading and Math are to blame for the devaluation of Social Studies within the elementary curriculum. Boyle-Baise, et al. (2008) described the pattern of Social Studies becoming a byproduct of Reading, or an opportunity to practice reading skills while learning about mildly interesting topics, rather than Social Studies instruction existing of its own accord. Heafner (2018) explained that the Social Studies instruction that does survive is often misunderstood, scripted, underutilized, and superficial, which means that it does not come close to living up to its full potential.

Today, Social Studies is more likely to be integrated into English Language Arts instruction than to receive a significant amount of its own dedicated instructional time. This does carry some benefits, such as drawing attention to the importance of learning disciplinary language and vocabulary that will support a student's overall academic achievement (Parker, 2012). Though integration is a successful strategy to address lack of Social Studies instructional time and promote literacy skills, teachers need adequate time, planning, and resources for it to be truly effective (Ollila & Macy, 2019). Integration runs the danger of being misused as a way to enrich reading content without fidelity to the knowledge funds and instructional methods that make Social Studies a unique discipline,

such as discussion, investigation, and role-play (Boyle-Baise, et al., 2008). Integration is more likely to be opportunistic than systemic, which is often to the detriment of both subject areas (Boyle-Baise, et al., 2008).

Boyle-Baise, et al. (2008) contended that elementary Social Studies can be reclaimed if it is integrated in a more intentional way. A reimagined alternative to integrated Social Studies is interdisciplinary Social Studies. This approach is associated with an increase in individual skills, a sense of connectedness, and increased engagement in civic life and social issues (Ollila & Macy, 2019). Hilburn and Wall (2011) suggested that an interdisciplinary approach draws from different subject areas to enhance conceptual understanding and construction of meaning, thereby preserving what is unique to this subject area without compromising its integrity. For example, an interdisciplinary unit utilizing both Science and Social Studies bridges the two subject areas with concepts, themes, and skills rather than relying on topics and facts that otherwise might not readily transfer (Hilburn & Wall, 2011). Groce (2004) suggested the use of storytelling, a technique typically utilized only during Language Arts instruction, as the basis for history instruction because it orally communicates ideas, beliefs, and lessons. This approach also provides the benefits of vocabulary, comprehension, and listening skills while building interest in a topic and giving students high motivation for retelling (Groce, 2004). McGuire (2007) proposed that narrative ties distinct disciplines together into a cohesive interdisciplinary unit so that learning is more personally meaningful and transferrable.

Heafner (2018) argued that one of the most important benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to teaching Social Studies is the development of higher-order, discipline-specific thinking that genuinely motivates students to participate in democratic

society. Hinde (2005) agreed that the purpose of interdisciplinary learning is not to eliminate disciplines, but to use them in combination to promote more powerful conceptual understanding that draws on the tools that each unique discipline provides. Elementary teachers are uniquely positioned to do this because they are responsible for teaching all core subject areas and are more likely to see the connections and relationships between them (Hinde, 2005). Teachers who provide successful interdisciplinary Social Studies instruction go beyond superficial detail to create clear, meaningful connections between concepts and promote student learning within the goals of each individual subject area (Hinde, 2005). Huck (2018) suggested the use of interdisciplinary, thematic units with authentic activities involving a wide variety of modalities and learning experiences unique to each discipline. Bohach and Meade (2014) further defended the importance of learning experiences organized around concepts instead of topics because they scaffold students to more readily access higher-order thinking.

Interdisciplinary teaching is guided by state and district standards within each discipline. Comprehensive standards that build and spiral across a student's academic career, as measured by standardized tests, demonstrate societal value for that subject area and the skills required for mastery. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to measure the success of Social Studies programs because, unlike English Language Arts, Math, or Science, it is not typically assessed through the use of standardized testing at the elementary level (Heafner, 2018). It is understandable that many teachers shortchange Social Studies instruction because they feel pressured to devote significantly more time to subject areas on which their students will be assessed. On the other hand, lack of testing

may actually benefit the discipline overall because the full breadth of the discipline doesn't run the risk of being artificially narrowed in scope by a standardized test. Social Studies is, by nature, a much more diverse, localized, and less standardized realm of knowledge, so perhaps the lack of standardized testing actually gives teachers more autonomy.

Unfortunately, though some teachers may be highly committed to the discipline, the overall class time dedicated to Social Studies instruction is highly dependent on a complex interaction between teacher-, school-, and district-level factors. Boyle-Baise (2008) lamented the fact that teachers who do not particularly care for the larger mission of Social Studies instruction will find integration convenient without questioning its impact on Social Studies instruction, yet propose that teachers who actively resist school- and district-level limitations such as required instructional minutes for English Language Arts or required reading materials are able to give Social Studies the instructional space it deserves. Heafner (2018) agreed, arguing that teachers who feel passionate about Social Studies still have autonomy to go against the grain, seeking out resources and carving out meaningful Social Studies instructional time despite pressure from administrators and accountability measures. Huck (2018) went even further to argue that academic freedom and teacher autonomy are in fact essential elements of Social Studies education because responsiveness to the unique needs of local students and local community is inherently part of the mission of Social Studies education. Heafner (2018) emphasized the importance of teacher attitudes by explaining that underlying teacher perceptions and priorities are often a greater barrier than school or district-level factors. This means that

teachers who do personally value Social Studies content and pedagogy have the potential to make a huge difference by providing effective Social Studies instruction.

Social Studies Instructional Methods

Social Studies instructional methods are as diverse as the content of the discipline itself. Even at the elementary level, instructional methods are important because they carry meaning and communicate the larger goals of Social Studies, to teach both content mastery and civic competence. In the previous section, interdisciplinary Social Studies instruction was explored as an important approach for combating the marginalization and ineffective integration of the discipline while also enriching learning opportunities for academic achievement and civic competence. In this section, the vision of effective Social Studies education is extended by summarizing a diverse range of instructional methods recommended by wide-ranging research.

Many researchers emphasize the importance of student-centered Social Studies instruction. Wiggins and McTighe (2011) developed the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework to promote the use of essential questions and big ideas to guide teacher thinking about students learning and meaning-making. UbD is intended to put student understanding at the core of all educational activity, determining end goals and meaningful activities that help students achieve them (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). Virgin (2014) further explored the application of UbD in a Social Studies instructional context and found that using big ideas was successful in promoting student achievement by helping students better connect concepts across units throughout the school year. Misco (2014) agreed that student-centered Social Studies learning should challenge students to create meaning across units and topics of study by integrating big ideas.

Other researchers promote student-centered Social Studies instruction designed around student-driven inquiry. Thacker, et al. (2018) explored the C3 Inquiry Driven Model, as developed by the National Council for the Social Studies, which encourages students to engage with compelling questions by using appropriate sources and investigation methods that are unique to the Social Studies discipline. The success of this approach depends on educators' level of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge, as described by Shulman (1985) in Thacker, et al. (2018). Misco (2014) extended this idea by creating the Powerful Social Studies Unit Design framework, which helps teachers live up to the potential of Social Studies as a discipline by creating inquiry-based, issue-centered, thematic, and project-based instruction to integrate meaningful content learning and development of civic competence skills across Social Studies units.

Place-based education is another approach to Social Studies instruction that seeks to connect students with the local context in order to make learning more meaningful for students. Liebtag (2018) celebrated place-based education as a method of using the power of place, rather than technology, to personalize learning for individual students. By immersing students in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, and learning opportunities, students become motivated and engaged in exploring their passions and identities (Liebtag, 2018). Another goal of place-based education is to combat technological fragmentation and disconnectedness by providing opportunities for students to develop an ecological understanding of their local environment and community (Liebtag, 2018). Place-based education has potential to be more relevant and accessible to students

because it frames the local surroundings as full of learning opportunities in a more intentional way than a single end-of-the-year field trip to an off-site location.

Land education is an alternative to place-based education that takes a more active, critical stance in exploring the importance of place in the development of human identity. Calderón (2014) argued that place-based education's push for greater connection with our surroundings doesn't do enough to recognize indigeneity and confront settler colonialism. As an extension of place-based education, land-based education seeks to achieve decolonizing work in education by recognizing that a person's identity is inextricable from the "historical and current colonial processes of the places we are from" (Calderón, 2014, p. 25). Calderón (2014) contended that the dominant discourse around land in the United States (i.e., manifest destiny) actively miseducates and maintains colonial understandings of place in order to protect Western power at the expense of indigenous peoples.

Unlike the more passive stance of place-based education, land education seeks to actively create a more equitable society by disrupting and decolonizing the dominant narrative. Calderón (2014) stated that students need an opportunity to learn how places have always been and continue to be indigenous land even after genocide, forced removal, destruction of natural resources, and forced assimilation. Calderón (2014) argued for an intercultural, decolonized understanding of place that promotes a relationship to land that is both ecologically and culturally sustainable without falsely celebrating perceived colonial successes to improve the land for capitalistic gains. The land education approach contributes toward the essential goals of Social Studies by helping students understand the complexity of the human history of their surroundings

and the motivation of different groups to *use* the natural environment, thus helping students understand their identity and their place in the community.

Other Social Studies instructional methods promote a student-centered approach to teaching both content and skills for citizenship. Bohach and Meade (2014) emphasized the incredible wealth of learning opportunities presented by interdisciplinary field trips. Real-life, hands-on experiences in the field help students develop the background knowledge that is essential to access and connect with larger, more abstract concepts. Collaborative learning is another instructional method that furthers the educational goals of the Social Studies discipline. Ollila and Macy (2019) contended that student-directed inquiry and cooperative learning through group projects and presentations increase student achievement but also provide students with the opportunity to practice democratic citizenship skills in the classroom and in the community. Finally, Ginsberg (2015) emphasized problem-based learning, rather than project-based learning, in order to promote deep learning that generates student agency and ownership through relevant, meaningful community engagement.

In addition to these instructional approaches, Fitchett and Heafner (2017) discussed the importance of using instructional methods that are unique to the Social Studies discipline. Social Studies programs that promote higher academic achievement utilize primary source material so that students can make meaning by interpreting real evidence. They create opportunities for multimodal learning across different texts and media types so that students can compare perspectives (Fitchett & Heafner, 2017). McGuire (2007) also emphasized the importance of organizing Social Studies instruction around powerful ideas visited from multiple perspectives. Other Social Studies

instructional methods that contribute to higher academic achievement include civil discussion, perspective-taking, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Fitchett & Heafner, 2017). Strong teacher preparation and pedagogical content knowledge unique to Social Studies also have a positive effect on student learning (Fitchett & Heafner, 2017). In short, effective Social Studies instruction is widely varied but quite intentional in the ways that it provides genuine opportunities for students to practice citizenship skills and actually engage as thinkers who are interacting with content, not just regurgitating it.

Besides instructional approaches, another essential element of Social Studies instruction is the curriculum itself. Eisner and Vallance (1974) created a framework to organize five different conflicting philosophies around curriculum development, ranging from academic rationalism to curriculum for social reconstruction. Though curriculum involves *what* students learn, it must also engage with the questions of *how* students will learn the content and *why* the content is considered worth learning within a particular place and time (Eisner & Vallance, 1974). In the United States, conceptions of curriculum vary widely because there is inherently no singular, unified perspective on the best curriculum for educating a "diverse, multilingual, multi-ability school population," especially due to the history of local control within public education (Ladson-Billings, 2016, p. 104). Just like any other element of education, such as instructional approach, curriculum is highly subject to the cultural, political, and economic forces at play within any given context (Ladson-Billings, 2016). Though many people might think of curriculum as infallible and unchanging, it is indeed subjective because it reflects the values and beliefs of a particular time and place. Yet curriculum does not just reflect:

curriculum itself has power because it plays an important role in transmitting those chosen values and beliefs to the next generation.

Finally, assessment is a critical element of any instructional method. In Social Studies in particular, assessment serves as an essential way to ensure that both academic content and civic competence goals are being achieved. Even though, as Heafner (2018) explained, Social Studies learning is not assessed through the use of standardized tests at the elementary level, it still matters (and is perhaps even more important) that teachers take on the challenge of meaningful, informative assessment. Bohach and Meade (2014) contended that assessment should be embedded in instruction in a natural way so that it can inform instruction in a natural feedback cycle, but also so that it does not interrupt the flow of learning. In addition, it seems inappropriate to measure civic competence learning outcomes like positive attitude toward ethnic diversity or disposition to participate in a democratic society through the use of traditional, formal assessment because these goals have to do with real human interaction. Assessment methods should respond in kind.

This section reviewed the literature on elementary Social Studies instruction. The twin objectives of Social Studies as a unique academic discipline were outlined: content mastery for social understanding across time and place, and civic competence within a pluralistic society. Next, the challenges that Social Studies education has faced in recent years were analyzed and opportunities for interdisciplinary, thematic curriculum design were explored. Finally, various methods for effective Social Studies instruction at the elementary level were highlighted. In the next section, the literature on multicultural education is reviewed in order to better understand the impact of education within a diverse society. These topics provide an essential foundation for pursuing the capstone

research question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?*

Multicultural Education

In this section, multicultural education is defined by investigating its history and goals within American public education. Various initiatives within the field of multicultural education are outlined that have been shown to be highly effective in achieving the desired outcomes of multicultural education. Culturally Responsive Teaching, in particular, is featured as a multicultural education method that has been successfully utilized to promote student achievement in a wide variety of contexts and settings. These topics inform the capstone question because understanding multicultural educational approaches will guide curricular design to build on the existing legacy of increased academic achievement and social reconstruction through reimagination of educational policy and practice.

Multicultural Education History and Goals

Multicultural education is a field of inquiry that seeks to develop educational policies and practices so that all students can learn (Atwater, Radzik-Marsh, & Strutchens, 1994). Multicultural education includes any initiative that explicitly seeks to promote educational equity for all students, regardless of background, based on the assumption that all students deserve equitable opportunities for academic achievement and lifelong success (Atwater, Radzik-Marsh, & Strutchens, 1994). The definitions are broad because there is a very wide range of approaches to defining, investigating, and addressing these complex issues involved with serving the diverse student population of American public schools.

Multicultural education seeks to address the interrelated issues of inequity in student academic achievement and inequities in society (McCarthy, 1991). Ginsberg (2015) asserted that public education is an institution that has long played a critical role in constructing and maintaining White privilege and power in American society at the expense and exclusion of minoritized groups. Ginsberg (2015) plainly stated a difficult, violent legacy: "appropriation of Native American land, the enslavement of African peoples, and the exploitation of Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, and Latino labor" that has resulted in unfair benefits and advantages for the majority White population (p. 5). Historically, public education in the United States has served as a major assimilating influence in society to build citizens, force minoritized groups to conform to dominant cultural values, and construct a national identity with White privilege and settler colonialism at its center (Calderón, 2014; McCarthy, 1991). Because of this legacy of education as a tool for oppression of minoritized people, multicultural education intentionally seeks to redress these inequities (McCarthy, 1991).

Historically, the education system has operated on a racist deficiency model built on the assumption that students from minority racial or cultural backgrounds come to school without adequate tools for academic achievement (Atwater, Radzik-Marsh, & Strutchens, 1994). Timberlake, Thomas, and Barrett (2017) explained that teachers often focus on students as being the problem when academic achievement is low, rather than examining all the other educational and societal factors at play. Multicultural education entails an assets-based model that recognizes and affirms the diverse cultural backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of all students as being assets for their educational success (Atwater, Radzik-Marsh, & Strutchens, 1994). This process is messy

because culture is complex, nuanced, and hard to pin down--though culture is taught, it is mostly taught implicitly and transmitted unsystematically as part of everyday life (Ginsberg, 2015). The intention of multicultural education is to better recognize and respond to the cultural complexity of the modern-day United States in order to promote academic achievement for all students.

McCarthy (1991) explained that multicultural education emerged from the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Various minoritized groups advocated for better inclusion and representation in American public schools, which was mostly achieved through local control of school leadership, policy, and curriculum (McCarthy, 1991). During this period, culture was reimagined as a "vehicle for resolution of racial inequality and antagonism" (McCarthy, 1991, p. 304). Highly localized approaches to pluralist curriculum change for specific cultural groups gradually shifted into broader attempts to combat both racism and underachievement of minority communities (Ladson-Billings 2006, McCarthy, 1991).

McCarthy (1991) complicated the definition of multicultural education by identifying three levels within the field. McCarthy (1991) described a strength of commitment that can range from mild celebration of diversity (*cultural understanding*), to efforts to ensure that all populations demonstrate competence in a language and culture outside their own (*cultural competence*), to a much stronger commitment to social reconstruction through more meaningful integration and inclusion of minoritized cultures in curriculum (*cultural emancipation*). The *cultural understanding* approach creates a bland melting pot that leads to stereotypes, while the *cultural competence* approach affirms cultural values in a pluralist society but still places Whiteness at its center

(McCarthy, 1991). The *cultural emancipation* approach is the most assertive in ensuring that all students can learn because it promotes change within education in order to achieve change within society, at the individual and community levels.

Ladson-Billings (2006) posited a different understanding of the relationship between educational outcomes and social inequity by arguing that the achievement gap is the direct result of social inequality that is replicated in educational settings. Ladson-Billings (2006) created the concept of *education debt* to illustrate what American society owes to minoritized communities after historical, economic, sociopolitical, and mistreatment and oppression. Paying back the education debt owed to minoritized communities may seem overwhelming and impossible, but Ladson-Billings (2006) contended that it is the right thing to do for those communities as well as the right thing to do in order to actually achieve the equitable, opportunity-based society we imagine ourselves to be.

Ladson-Billings (1994) asserted that multicultural education matters whether you teach many students of color, or only a few. This is because multicultural education actively seeks to reconstruct education discourse on the local level within a larger, more diverse societal context. Eriksen (2018) argued that discourse constructs and reconstructs unequal power relations and stereotypical images in order to normalize the marginalization of minoritized groups. Given that no learning situation is culturally or politically neutral, educators must recognize and intentionally use the power of education to simultaneously construct individuals and also construct the society in which those individuals live and learn together (Ginsberg, 2015). This means that having more *cultural emancipation* multicultural education initiatives across many local contexts,

regardless of majority or minority student demographics in those communities, will start to change the larger reality of discourse in American public education and in society at large.

Elements of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education initiatives are intended to have broad societal impact, which means that their reach must be deep and profound. Ladson-Billings (1994) identified five key areas in which educators can achieve educational equity goals for individuals as well as social reconstruction goals for minoritized communities and society as a whole. The first of these areas is directly within the control of educators: teacher beliefs about student abilities have a significant impact on student achievement (Almeida, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This means that teachers who demonstrate low expectations for certain demographics will actively promote lower achievement for their students; teachers who demonstrate high expectations for all students will contribute to higher academic achievement for their students.

Ladson-Billings (1994) also argued that teacher awareness about culture, racism, and privilege will help teachers promote academic achievement for all students. Almeida (1996) agreed that lack of teacher preparation and cultural awareness is associated with racist portrayals of minoritized groups that harm their self-esteem. Almeida (1996) contended that teachers must be able to examine their own culturally-constructed biases and stereotypes in order to be able to connect with students and assess their culturally-constructed attitudes. In short, this means everyone in the classroom, both teachers and students, are cultural beings with beliefs, attitudes, and values that will influence their educational experience (Ginsberg, 2015). If teachers are guilty of replicating and

reinforcing harmful stereotypes, they are also capable of doing the opposite--actively and explicitly creating equitable opportunities for learning about students' own cultural and racial groups as well as learning about different cultural and racial groups.

Another key area of multicultural education is curriculum redesign. Building on the work of Eisner and Vallance (1974), many other researchers conceive of curriculum as being larger than just content (the *what*) and choose to expand into the *who*, *how*, and *why*. Educational materials carry significant power because curriculum is about the essence of what is considered knowledge worth knowing, as it belongs to a particular group in power (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2016). One unfortunate reality of the current educational inequity for certain minoritized groups is simply limited access to accurate curricular content, which often lacks multiple perspectives from a variety of experiences within American life (Timberlake, Thomas, & Barrett, 2017). Groups that are misrepresented and even omitted from curriculum materials need to be represented and treated fairly in order to cultivate inclusive attitudes from all students and demonstrate value for diversity within society (Ladson-Billings, 1994, Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Multicultural education should be an ongoing, intentional effort to embed multiple perspectives in instruction across content areas rather than a once-a-year, *heroes and holidays* approach within the Social Studies curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Almeida (1996) agreed about the importance of curriculum redesign for greater inclusivity but also pushes the idea further, arguing that multicultural education must go beyond simply celebrating diversity in the United States to explicitly creating anti-bias education that helps all students challenge stereotypes and discrimination. When students are given equitable access to anti-bias curriculum, informed by multiple perspectives, and

equipped with the skills they need to act as agents for social change, they will be able to counteract the harmful impact of bias on them and their peers, both in schools and out in the community (Almeida, 1996). If curriculum is subject to political, economic, and cultural forces, as Ladson-Billings (2016) asserted, curriculum also has the opportunity to respond to and help reimagine societal priorities such as increased value for inclusion and racial diversity that are consistent with the mission of the Social Studies discipline to develop civic competence.

Multicultural education is tasked with creating curricula that include and respond to diverse student identities (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Fitchett and Heafner (2017) indicated that student background has a powerful influence on how well students are able to connect with and retain what they learn. Given that history is a culturally constructed accounting of the past, Eurocentric, male-dominated culture is much more likely to take center stage in Social Studies instruction (Eriksen, 2018; Fitchett & Heafner, 2017). Students whose background is not represented in curriculum materials and content will not be able to make meaning from it as easily, which makes these students much less likely to feel motivated and engaged as students and as democratic citizens (Fitchett & Heafner, 2017). Educational discourse that disenfranchises minoritized populations such as females and students of color can be replaced with more inclusive instructional approaches that actively empower these populations (Fitchett & Heafner, 2017). Yet McCarthy (1991) cautioned that the pendulum swing of multiple perspectives within a social reconstructionist curriculum needs to be balanced, in order to avoid portraying any one particular cultural group in an exclusively positive or negative light.

Multiple researchers agree that multicultural education should result in genuine empowerment of minoritized populations. Grant and Gillespie (1993) described two common sins within multicultural education: empowerment that focuses on black-white relationships, or white-Other relationships, while centering White culture as *normal* at the exclusion of all other racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds; and empowerment that conceives of power as a finite quantity that must be shared more equitably between groups. Ginsberg (2015) advocated for an understanding of empowerment that comes from within as a result of one's own beliefs and actions in collaboration with others, not from White people distributing their privilege. This conception of empowerment demonstrates the importance of recognizing inherent potential in every student, regardless of background. It also demonstrates a mindset that there is not a finite amount of social, political, or economic power that has been hoarded by the majority White population and must now be distributed as a form of reparations or education debt. Rather, there are conditions that society can create to recognize pre-existing power and continue to cultivate it further still in minoritized populations who already have the same potential for growth and leadership within society.

Many researchers lament the limitations of multicultural education. Ladson-Billings (1994) pointed out that setting matters: students notice inequities early on, and de facto segregation in many communities implicitly communicates to children that minoritized students don't deserve the same opportunities as White students. McCarthy (1991) and Timberlake, Thomas, and Barrett (2017) both pointed out that content, curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher beliefs all have a significant impact on student educational experience, but they place an unfair burden on individual teachers when

racist school structures and educational policies must also change in order to truly achieve the social reconstruction goals of multicultural education.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

One final focus area within multicultural education is pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (1994) stated that successful multicultural education must also involve a significant commitment to reimagining pedagogy. Adjusting instructional methods to be more reflective of students from diverse backgrounds means creating opportunities to recognize the legitimacy of their out-of-school experiences and knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This also means reimagining groupings, modalities, assessment methods, and communication styles, among many other elements of instruction.

Culturally Responsive Teaching, or CRT, is a specific initiative within multicultural education that seeks to improve educational outcomes for all students through reimagined pedagogy. The goals of CRT are to better recognize and incorporate students' home cultures and to eradicate the experience of cultural discontinuity that leads to the cumulative development of harmful self-concept (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Because school culture is most often reflective of White, middle-class norms, minoritized student educational experience often depends on how well they are able to cope within these constraints and bridge the disconnect between their home culture and school culture (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Grant and Gillespie (1993) also argued that cultural discontinuity does not just lead to negative self-concept but actually has a negative effect on minoritized student academic achievement. Further, minoritized students often experience cultural discontinuity between the social, economic, and political goals of mainstream education (to achieve academic success in preparation for the workforce)

compared to the goals and values within minoritized cultures that may promote other priorities (Reyhner, 2017).

In contrast, Torres (2017) disagreed with the assumption that cultural discontinuity is to blame for persistent academic underachievement of minoritized groups. Torres (2017) argued that there is no statistically significant relationship demonstrating a negative impact on achievement when home culture is discontinued, and no statistically significant relationship demonstrating a positive impact when home culture is given central importance in the educational context. Torres (2017) acknowledged the need for longitudinal studies, given that the effect of cultural discontinuity may be cumulative, but cultural discontinuity is just one of many difficult factors that may negatively impact a student's academic achievement. For example, Hermes (2005) highlighted the complex, interrelated, cause and effect relationships between cultural discontinuity, systemic racism, and cultural and economic marginalization, stating that cultural discontinuity cannot be the sole cause of academic underachievement.

One additional ingredient in the recipe for Culturally Responsive Teaching is motivation. Ginsberg (2015) emphasized the importance of understanding the influence of student motivation on engagement and academic achievement. Motivation is culturally mediated and emotions are socialized through culture, which means that what is culturally and emotionally significant for an individual will spark intrinsic motivation for learning (Ginsberg, 2015). In order for students to feel motivated and engaged to learn, they need to encounter favorable conditions in the classroom that meet them where they feel the most curiosity and connection to make meaning in the world (Ginsberg, 2015).

These conditions, as outlined by the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching, include inclusion for respect and connectedness, positive attitude for choice and personal relevance, meaning to create challenge and engagement, and competence to promote authenticity and effectiveness (Ginsberg, 2015). These conditions vary widely depending on the student population within any given educational context.

What all researchers can agree on is that the achievement gap does indeed exist and that the American public education system must do a better job promoting the achievement of all students, regardless of background. As discussed earlier, multicultural education recognizes the close ties between academic underachievement and social inequity. Perhaps one of the issues is that standardized tests, as testing instruments created by and reflective of the dominant White culture, simply do not capture the complexity of these issues. Though research has not yet provided strong evidence of a positive impact of CRT on minoritized student academic achievement, this does not mean we should abandon all efforts to develop and promote CRT practices. Surely it is better to promote educational practices that celebrate minoritized students rather than those that intentionally and unintentionally have been used to cause harm to minoritized students throughout the history of American public education.

Culturally Responsive Teaching is an inherently complicated endeavor due to the fact that it is intentionally dependent on context. As Ginsberg (2015) emphasized, the Motivational Framework for CRT is not a checklist of best practices. Instead, it is a coherent framework of strategies that need to be adjusted to the real, live students in any given educational setting. The framework explicitly supports educators in creating learning environments that are equitable, pluralistic, and meaningful across cultures

without reducing student cultures to stereotypes, such as representing all indigenous people using moccasins, masks, and fry bread (Ginsberg, 2015).

Even though research demonstrates the positive impact of Culturally Responsive Teaching on student achievement, it does not square well with the recent push toward standardization in public education, as described by Ladson-Billings (2016). The post-NCLB emphasis on basic Reading and Math skills within scripted, *one-size-fits-all* curricula and the exclusion of Social Studies instruction would be considered detrimental to the work of CRT, which is considered successful because it is so highly individualized and dependent on local context, beliefs, and relationships. Timberlake, Thomas, and Barrett (2017) found that teachers perceived scripted curricula to be more equitable because they thought it provided universal access to high-quality curriculum and high expectations, which are indeed ways that minoritized students across the country experience educational inequity. Yet scripted curricula often reinforce the same educational structures that are already *not* working to promote greater inclusion and academic achievement for minoritized students. Timberlake, Thomas, and Barrett (2017) further asserted that curriculum must conform to learners, not the other way around.

Culturally Responsive Teaching advances the cause of multicultural education by not just making learning accessible to all students, but by celebrating minoritized student populations and making educational structures adjust to the students they serve. When educators and educational systems make the effort to connect with students on their own terms, without relying on harmful stereotypes and assumptions, or superficial injections of cultural integration, students are granted a more equitable opportunity to learn in ways that truly promote motivation, interest, engagement, and meaningful achievement. CRT

recognizes that educational success within a pluralistic, democratic society doesn't just consist of meeting content standards and cultivating bland civic competence--it is building an empowered citizenry with both the knowledge and the skills to make a difference in society.

This section reviewed the literature regarding multicultural education by investigating its history and goals within American public education. Various initiatives within multicultural education were outlined that have been shown to be highly effective in achieving the desired outcomes for multicultural education, with particular focus on the needs of minoritized students. Culturally Responsive Teaching, in particular, was featured as a method that has been successfully utilized to promote student achievement in a wide variety of contexts and settings. These topics within multicultural education provide an essential foundation for pursuing the capstone research question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?*

American Indian/Alaska Native Education

In this section, the literature on the unique educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native populations within the United States is reviewed. The use of education as a historical and current-day tool of oppression and marginalization of indigenous people is examined. Scholarship within the multicultural education field of Culture-Based Education is highlighted to reach a deeper understanding of culturally responsive educational policy and practice for this specific demographic within public education. These topics inform the capstone question by more deeply investigating the reasons for teaching about American Indian/Alaska Native peoples, histories, and cultures and

recognizing educational initiatives intended to specifically benefit Native students as well as society as a whole.

Unique History, Issues, and Opportunities

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities represent a unique minoritized population within the United States. This group is conceptualized as such because of the communities' unique status as a racial minority and their legal/political relationship with the federal government (Brayboy, 2005). Unfortunately, AI/AN communities have experienced some of the worst educational and social outcomes of any minority group in the United States. These range from lower life expectancy, graduation rates, and rates of representation in leadership roles to higher poverty, suicide rates, infant mortality rates, unemployment rates, and negative public health outcomes (Executive Office of the President, 2014; Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Unique issues faced by AI/AN groups today include academic underachievement and lack of advanced degrees, language shift and language loss, natural resources management, overrepresentation in special education, and power struggles between tribal, state, and federal governments (Brayboy, 2005).

Through a variety of legal, economic, political, and social mechanisms, Native peoples and cultures have been systematically colonized, devalued, disrespected, stereotypes, generalized, and made invisible within United States society in historical and ongoing ways (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Today, AI/AN peoples suffer from discrimination and inequality in many different forms, most visibly through racist portrayals in popular culture such as sports team mascots and television and movies roles that historicize, romaticize, and trivialize Native cultures and peoples (Almeida, 1996).

This discrimination is harmful on many different levels, but also belies the fact that the AI/AN population is both incredibly culturally diverse and changing, just as all cultures change and adapt over time (Grant & Gillespie, 1993).

Education in particular has been a tool of social control, ethnocide, and oppression of the AI/AN population, to the benefit of a majority White society (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009, Skinner, 1999). When AI/AN tribes still had tribal autonomy, educational outcomes were dramatically different. Skinner (1999) asserted that the Cherokee population had higher literacy rates in both Cherokee and English in the 1840s than the White population in English. With the colonization of North America, the right of these groups as sovereign nations to educate their own children was taken away (Skinner, 1999). Native peoples were first educated at schools located on reservations, then forced off-reservation to attend schools whose main objective was assimilation and limited vocational skills, which reinforced a marginalized economic status (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). AI/AN groups were routinely taught to reject their own language and culture, which led to cultural ignorance, disconnect, and disrespect (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Common practices such as removing children from their families and communities, forcing them to cut their hair and speak only English, and preventing all opportunities to participate in cultural practices directly devalued AI/NA lifeways, cultures, and people (Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995, Skinner 1999). Today's educational outcomes for AI/AN groups include poor attendance, high dropout rate, and academic underachievement, which Grant & Gillespie (1993) argued are metrics of both historic and ongoing failure to provide a high-quality education for this unique demographic.

The use of education as a tool for oppression of AI/AN peoples has continued into the current-day but in less obvious, more pervasive forms. The culture shock that AI/AN students still experience today demonstrates that forced assimilation has not achieved its goals (Skinner, 1999). Estrin and Nelson-Barber (1995) argued that today's educational practices may not seem to directly devalue AI/NA cultures, but they are no less alienating for AI/AN students than historical educational practices were. Grant & Gillespie (1993) and Almeida (1996) both emphasized that education for and about AI/AN peoples has suffered from many different types of biases and misrepresentations. These range from explicit to implicit and unflattering to dangerous: omission, defamation, disparagement, implicit exclusion, lack of inertia, obliteration, disembodiment, and lack of balance. Almeida (1996) and Grant and Gillespie (1993) contended that education about AI/AN peoples typically frames them as *dead and buried* with no current-day relevance, or as opportunities for students to act as tourists, sampling from the most exotic or romanticized elements of their cultures. This also presents AI/AN cultures as monolithic and unchanging, though they are in fact diverse and dynamic (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Priorities established for foreign language instruction renders Native languages practically invisible (Skinner, 1999). AI/AN students struggle against racism, disrespect, cultural discontinuity, and prejudice in their educational experiences, all of which negatively affect academic achievement (Grant & Gillespie, 1993).

One source of racism in schools is curriculum materials that are often deeply flawed. Almeida (1996) argued that textbooks often create sweeping generalizations that ignore the true diversity of Native peoples, promote a colonizer perspective, capitalize on spiritual traditions, disrespect Native intellectual property rights, and delegitimize Native

knowledge funds. Just one example of exclusion is routine framing of the *discovery* of the headwaters of the Mississippi by Henry Schoolcraft, a White male colonist, though the only reason he was able to find it was thanks to guidance from local Ojibwe people who had known about it for generations (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). AI/AN groups have incredibly rich oral traditions that are often treated with skepticism or treated as lower status in comparison to written historical accounts created by European Americans (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Almeida (1996) lamented the lack of quality, unbiased curriculum resources about AI/AN peoples, which leaves teachers frantically searching for information and too often relying on harmful stereotypes.

AI/AN education initiatives seek to redress the historical violence that their communities and cultures have suffered in educational contexts and in society by promoting both academic achievement and positive social and cultural outcomes. When educational discourse demonstrates that Native cultures are worthy of respect, both Native and non-Native students also learn that Native peoples are worthy of respect (Grant & Gillespie, 1993). Reyhner (2017) demonstrated another important connection between education and society by arguing that language revitalization efforts within local school contexts are in fact community revitalization efforts to combat the complex negative effects of standardized, colonized, assimilationist educational practices. The United States Department of Education (2001) more simply states this connection by pointing out that all students do well when their language and culture are incorporated into their education. While majority White, middle-class students are currently benefiting from a familiar language and culture in their educational experiences, AI/AN students deserve the same opportunities for academic success and cultural well-being.

Culture-Based Education

Culture-Based Education (CBE) is a multicultural education approach that challenges the forces of colonization in education and supports the unique needs of AI/AN communities through Culturally Responsive Teaching (Hermes, 2005). Brayboy (2005) explained that the minoritized racial and legal/political status of AI/AN groups justifies the importance of a relevant educational approach that better takes into account both the colonizing and assimilating forces that the community has suffered. CBE developed during the same period as multicultural education in the 1960s, when local reform movements across the country accomplished better tribal control with increased ability to incorporate local AI/AN cultures and languages into education (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). Finally, in 1998, CBE gained greater traction through Executive Order 13096, which recognized a special, historic responsibility for the education of AI/AN populations (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009).

CBE seeks to educate AI/AN communities through their own cultures, and often their own language, in order to achieve success both in their own cultural context *and* within mainstream academic and socioeconomic contexts (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). CBE builds a bridge between home and school by including indigenous student identity and background as "meaningful sources for creating optimal learning environments" (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009, p. 32). Generally, communities demonstrate strong support for heritage language and culture in schools despite their lower social status, because the desired outcome is students capable of linguistic and cultural code-switching (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). CBE's commitment to demonstrating the validity of both indigenous and Western knowledge funds helps demonstrate that both are valuable and helps

cultivate students who are prepared to achieve in both contexts in the unique ways that success will be defined in those contexts (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Grant & Gillespie, 1993). As Morotti (2006) argued, it is unfair for academic success to come at the cost of cultural assimilation. Hermes (2005) added that students shouldn't be forced to choose between academic and cultural success--why not choose both?

CBE also seeks to improve AI/AN educational experiences by promoting the development of positive self-concept. Guillory and Williams (2014) and Hermes (2005) described CBE as a bridge or a two-way street between community and school that will benefit student self-esteem, identity development, and attitude toward education. Building on the work of Vygotsky, Morotti (2006) contended that learning is constructed through cognitive skills within social, historical, political, and cultural contexts, so learning must blend individual needs within the academic functions of school with the cultural patterns of the local community. In today's pluralistic society, positive self-concept is considered essential for healthy psychological functioning, and, conveniently, academic achievement has been demonstrated to have a strong influence on self-concept (Morotti, 2006). This means that students who experience meaningful, culturally-relevant academic success have a better chance at gaining strong cultural identity, coping skills, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills--all skills which are highly desirable within a range of cultural contexts, including within society at large (Morotti, 2006).

The work to make education more culturally responsive to AI/AN populations is most successful when it occurs within many levels of educational discourse, starting with curriculum and content. Educators of AI/AN students are more likely to resort to scripted, standardized reading programs in the hopes they will promote reading skills for

underachieving AI/AN students, but this could not be further from the culturally valid ways of communicating and interpreting information within AI/AN cultures (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). Within CBE, content must be relatable, motivating, visual, and collaborative instead of competitive and individualistic (Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995). Students must have meaningful exposure to AI/AN authors and literature about relevant and meaningful topics (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009). AI/AN cultural stories and narratives, as the knowledge base of the culture, must be treated as roadmaps to communities, not trivialized or treated as inferior to written accounts (Brayboy, 2005).

CBE also strived to be culturally responsive to AI/AN communities in the areas of instruction, pedagogy, and assessment. Estrin and Nelson-Barber (1995) made the fascinating observation that an interdisciplinary, integrated, holistic, and concept-based constructivist educational approach with an emphasis on real-life relevance within the local context (i.e., what is generally understood as effective educational practice for all students) is potentially very compatible with AI/AN cultures overall. Grant and Gillespie (1993) agrees, arguing that daily lives and real-life tasks involve natural conversations, talking while doing, and storytelling, not lessons built around isolated, discrete pieces of knowledge. Following patterns within many AI/AN cultural traditions, CBE instruction is more likely to focus on observation and direct experience instead of a more Westernized style of explicit, direct instruction (Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995). Historically, indigenous peoples practiced exclusively hands-on, experiential education taught by elders in cooperative lessons, as measured by what is ultimately the most authentic, culturally-relevant assessment: successful completion of the tasks required by daily life within the local context (Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995). In contrast to White students,

who are socialized into understanding formal assessment as an important cultural event, assessment within CBE happens naturally, within a real-world context, such as an informal but explicit and purposeful demonstration of learning within a cooperative group (Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995).

Brayboy and Castagno (2009) argued that Culture-Based Education strives to best meet the needs of indigenous students. CBE is intended to combat the many forms of oppression that AI/AN students have suffered in educational contexts and supplant them with practices that help AI/AN students learn better, find more value in education, and confidently construct their own knowledge and identity (Guillory & Williams, 2014). CBE is considered one of the most important tools for promoting individual student success while simultaneously reconstructing and revitalizing AI/AN cultures, languages, and communities. Students who are equipped for success in both contexts generally experience positive self-concept and are better able to contribute to their cultural community as well as participate in society.

CBE is a complex multicultural education initiative with many critics who believe it should be more effective in achieving its goals. Torres (2017) believed that the negative impact of cultural discontinuity on student achievement may actually be overstated, but CBE still seeks to erase cultural discontinuity in order to increase academic achievement of AI/AN students. Hermes (2005) argued that the harm caused by cultural discontinuity at school pales in comparison to the much larger negative impact of systemic racism and structural inequality. But Estrin and Nelson-Barber (1995) argued that navigating a cultural divide between their heritage community and the mainstream, Western, White

community places an unfair strain on AI/AN students, and their efforts won't necessarily translate into academic success without additional, more culturally responsive support.

There is still a great deal of uncertainty about the impact of CBE in the long term. Guillory and Williams (2014) stated that there is a need for further research to demonstrate a truly positive impact of CBE on AI/AN student academic achievement. Hermes (2005) mused about the future direction of AI/AN education and wondered if including culture in education through CBE and Culturally Relevant Teaching will be enough to heal the wounds of oppression. Ultimately, Hermes (2005) concluded, "it is fitting that there is not one uniform response to such enormously important questions" (p. 14). The whole point of CBE is that it helps education conform to diverse students and cultures (of any background), not the other way around, while also constructing a new, more inclusive social reality in the process. No matter what form it takes, successful CBE will ideally change how AI/AN students think of education and society as well as how education and society think of AI/AN students (Brayboy, 2005). As Okakok (1989) wrote, "educating a child means equipping him or her with the capability to succeed in the world he or she will live in" (p. 253). The world that children will live in is still being formed at this very moment, so we as educators must seize the opportunity to influence it and equip all of our students to also help create it.

This section reviewed the literature on the unique educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native populations within the United States. Next, the use of education as a historical and current-day tool of oppression and marginalization of indigenous people was examined. Culture-Based Education was highlighted as a specific area within multicultural education with significant insight to offer regarding culturally responsive

educational policy and practice for better serving Native students in public education settings. These topics relating to education about, with, and for Native populations provide an essential foundation for pursuing the capstone research question.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the literature was reviewed relating to the capstone question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* Three topics were identified and examined in order to inform the curricular design process to create an inclusive and instructionally sound Maine Studies curricular unit for Grade 3 students. In this section, the major findings within each topic are summarized, then analyzed to better understand their impact on the development of this project.

The literature within the first topic, Social Studies education, revealed the high expectations to which the field holds itself accountable. The Social Studies discipline encompasses a wide range of areas of study. Elementary Social Studies is intended to teach content, or knowledge about people, place, and time, as well as civic competence, or skills and values for active democratic citizenship. Recent decades have favored math and reading instruction over Social Studies, which resists standardization and suffers when integrated with English Language Arts for the sake of convenience. Research demonstrates the importance of making sure that Social Studies instruction lives up to its full potential through the use of approaches such as interdisciplinary learning, land and place-based education, concept-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning, student inquiry, and the thoughtful integration of multiple perspectives.

The second topic of critical importance to the capstone question is multicultural education. The review of the literature has shown that multicultural education is a diverse field of inquiry that developed out of a need to address social inequities through the power of education for social change. Minoritized populations in the United States are subject to negative influences in education, such as academic underachievement and cultural discontinuity. Minoritized populations also experience negative influences in society, such as racism, exclusion from housing and social services, and ongoing lack of economic opportunity. Multicultural education draws on a wide range of strategies, commitments, and approaches in order to support the success of minoritized students by promoting meaningful change at all levels of educational discourse, from content and pedagogy to student-teacher relationships and institutional policies. Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching are two specific approaches which seek to better recognize, affirm, and validate all individuals and cultures with the goal of more equitable educational and social outcomes. This supports the development of a curricular unit that not only teaches *about* various groups of people who have lived in this place over time (multicultural content) but also teaches *through* culturally responsive methods and relationships that demonstrate openness for multiple perspectives and asset-based, student-centered, social learning, among other strategies (multicultural pedagogy).

The final topic within the review of the literature is AI/AN education. The review of the literature has demonstrated that indigenous peoples in the United States have a unique history as well as unique educational and social needs. As a colonized, minoritized group with cultural and linguistic diversity across hundreds of sovereign

tribal nations, this demographic has suffered horrifying violence ranging from genocide, stolen land and natural resources, and forced assimilation, to the eradication of cultural lifeways and fragmentation of families and communities. Social and educational outcomes for AI/AN peoples are among the worst in the nation, which demonstrates the importance of using education thoughtfully and intentionally as a tool for social reconstruction, partnership, and empowerment rather than a tool of violence and continued colonization. Centering Wabanaki peoples, perspectives, and voices in the curricular unit and ensuring that students learn about current-day presence and contributions of Wabanaki peoples in Maine are essential to avoid damaging historicization, romanticization, or trivialization.

After reviewing the literature in these three areas related to the capstone question, it is clear that curriculum must be designed both from the perspective of an educator and the perspective of a citizen invested in social change. The goal for this project was to design a Grade 6 curricular unit with enough integrity to do justice to the intended goals of the Social Studies discipline and multicultural, culturally responsive education to actively construct a more informed, more inclusive society in current-day Maine. As the diverse threads of learning from the review of the literature are woven together into a convergent path for curricular design, Skinner (1999) offers further wisdom for how to reimagine educational contexts: “creating caring classroom communities that nurture the human spirit, regardless of ethnicity, is the beginning step in building an educational environment that does not assault any student’s culture” (p. 130). Avoiding assault on minoritized student cultures that are already devalued by society is the least educators can do; creating caring classroom communities that genuinely value, nurture, and include *all*

students is the best educators can do! This is both a challenge and a responsibility. Classrooms serve as critical models for the future society educators hope that students will both experience and actively help construct outside of the formal public education context.

In this section, a theoretical foundation was established for a Social Studies curricular unit that successfully promotes academic achievement for all students, both indigenous and non-indigenous, while also promoting the larger goal of building knowledge about and integration of Wabanaki peoples in Maine. In the next section, various resources are reviewed that were used to design a curricular unit to address the capstone question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* A rationale is provided to justify the use of multiple frameworks to inform the curriculum design process. The intended setting and context are described and a proposal is created for how the success of the project will be assessed. These various resources and contextual factors, combined with the review of the literature, promote the development of thoughtful, responsible, and integrated curricular design.

CHAPTER 3

Project Description

Introduction

The previous section reviewed the literature related to the capstone question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* Learning from previous research related to the topics of Social Studies education, multicultural education, and AI/AN education has underscored the importance of supporting the success of all students by harnessing the power of student-centered, culturally responsive education for impactful social change within schools and society. Now this theoretical, practical, and cultural knowledge within the field must be integrated with the realities and needs within the current-day state of Maine in order to design a curricular unit capable of achieving the goals of my research question.

This section outlines the methods that were utilized to design a curricular unit to address the capstone question. A variety of frameworks are highlighted and a rationale is provided to justify the use of more than one framework to achieve the goals of this project. The intended setting, audience, and context are described for the curricular unit to be utilized in the classroom. The major components of the curricular unit are outlined, followed by a proposal for how the project's effectiveness at answering the capstone question will be assessed. A timeline for the completion of the curricular unit is provided. Finally, the chapter concludes by envisioning a culturally responsive Social Studies

curriculum that takes on new life when interpreted and adapted by teachers to best fit their students in local classroom contexts.

Curriculum Design Frameworks

Curriculum design is a fascinating process informed by pedagogical, social, cultural, economic, and political factors. As examined in the previous chapter, the work of Eisner and Vallance (1974) demonstrated that curriculum is a site of incredible complexity and conflict between values and goals held by various stakeholders in different positions of power. Curriculum content, goals, and orientation all matter in the larger conversation about what educational experiences in a particular context are intended to achieve, and for whom. This curriculum design process began from an orientation towards curriculum as a force for social reconstruction, as described by Eisner and Vallance (1974). This curricular design process was also grounded in an understanding of curriculum as an essential ingredient in multicultural education, to promote cultural emancipation and improved educational and social outcomes for minoritized groups, as described by McCarthy (1991). Curriculum is just one component of educational discourse and reality as a whole, but it is a critical ingredient in promoting meaningful social change.

Due to the intended outcomes of this curricular design project, it was essential to demonstrate holistic commitment to the values of multicultural education. Rather than choosing just one framework, multiple curriculum design frameworks were utilized in order to maximize the ability to create a balanced, culturally responsive curriculum informed by multiple perspectives. This allowed the curricular design process and product to be more consistent with the priorities of multicultural and culturally responsive

education, rather than relying on just one particular culturally-informed conceptualization of curriculum design. This is also consistent with best practices for critical thinking and multiple perspectives within the field of Social Studies education, as promoted by Fitchett & Heafner (2017) and McGuire (2007).

The first framework that informed the curricular design process was the Understanding by Design approach, created by Wiggins and McTighe (2011). This approach emphasized the importance of prioritizing student understanding through the use of backward design. The UbD framework suggested starting the curriculum design process by determining performance goals for student understanding, then creating the big ideas and essential questions that will guide the entire scope and sequence of the curriculum before going back to fill in the details (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). UbD was a helpful framework for curricular design because of its emphasis on all students being able to make meaning, which will only happen if they are able to connect with the curriculum and become invested in their own learning, not just an activity for activity's sake (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). This approach requires teachers to frequently use authentic assessment in order to better understand student learning and encourage students' abilities to transfer it to new situations, such as more inclusive attitudes towards Wabanaki peoples both inside and outside of school.

Wiggins and McTighe (2011) emphasized the fact that the UbD framework can be universally applied because it is not a philosophy and does not compete with other instructional approaches. While UbD is compatible with other instructional priorities, it would not be responsible to design a multicultural, culturally responsive curriculum solely based on one framework, particularly one that describes curriculum design as a

"problem" to be solved, students as "clients", and curriculum as "software" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, p. 8, 13). As explained by Brayboy & Castagno (2009), Guillory (2009), and Hermes (2005), these analogies are practically the antithesis of Native lifeways and values. Using the conceptions of curriculum framework from Eisner and Vallance (1974), UbD would be considered a mainstream, Western approach to curriculum for development of cognitive processes or academic rationalism. Because I chose to conceptualize curriculum as a method of social reconstruction, it was necessary to incorporate additional frameworks to create a more balanced and complete curricular unit.

An additional curriculum design framework that was utilized is Powerful Social Studies Unit Design, or PSSUD, as developed by Misco (2014). PSSUD was a framework unique to the Social Studies discipline that built on the spiraling structure of the C3 Inquiry Driven Model, as developed by the National Council for the Social Studies, in order to thoughtfully integrate the many ways of knowing within this complicated, human area of study. PSSUD sought to help teachers move beyond standards and textbooks and transcend fragmented, surface-level content instruction into actively creating Social Studies courses of study that are thematic, engaging, challenging, issue-centered, and project-based. Misco (2014) claimed that PSSUD was an essential framework for educators who seek to create Social Studies instruction robust enough to live up to its larger purpose: equip students to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, and citizens through the use of student-centered inquiry. This framework helps promote best practices in the field of Social Studies by creating a holistic instructional design philosophy to align student interests and motivations with the larger mission of the Social

Studies discipline, to the benefit of individuals and society as a whole. When used together with the UbD framework, the PSSUD framework helped support the creation of a cohesive Social Studies curricular unit that promoted meaningful, student-centered, inquiry-based learning to transfer into larger societal contexts and promote social change.

The final resource that was integrated into the framework for curriculum design was the recommendations of the Final Report of the Wabanaki Studies Commission. The Commission was formed in 2003 to provide state-wide, Wabanaki-led guidance for the implementation of a 2001 Maine state law known as LD291, or "An Act to Require Teaching of Maine Native American History and Culture in Maine's Schools". All four Wabanaki Nations contributed to the Final Report itself, which was intended to serve as a resource for educators trying to more effectively teach Maine students about Maine Native Americans. It would be unconscionable to create a Maine Studies unit focused on this place with the goal of promoting knowledge and inclusion of Wabanaki peoples without centering the perspectives, wisdom, and resources of the Wabanaki peoples themselves.

Some of the key principles from the Final Report were that Wabanaki Studies should be integrated into Maine Studies, not treated as a separate unit, and that instruction should focus on Wabanaki peoples in the past as well as in the present so that students can come to understand historic and ongoing contributions of the community (Wabanaki Studies Commission, 2003). Using the principles established by the Commission aided in the development of a highly localized, culturally responsive pedagogy that did not rely on essentializing or romanticizing Native American peoples, a mistake that has already been committed too many times before by educators with good intentions but many blind

spots, including the settler-colonialist mindset described by Calderón (2014). This project utilized the powerful recommendations of the Wabanaki Studies Commission while utilizing the Understanding by Design and Powerful Social Studies Unit Design frameworks for the overarching unit design. Together, these resources promote a student-centered curriculum design process to create engaging, effective, and meaningful Social Studies educational experiences.

Intended Context and Audience

As mentioned in Chapter One, Maine is a relatively small state with a total population of about 1.3 million (US Census Bureau, 2019). I teach Grade 3 in Lewiston, which is the second-largest town in the state with a population of just 36,000 people (US Census Bureau, 2019). I teach at a K-6 school in a self-contained classroom, which means that I have the flexibility and time to utilize an interdisciplinary Maine Studies curricular unit in ways that may expand beyond the bounds of designated Social Studies time. I plan to share the curricular unit with other Grade 3 teachers in my district and perhaps even others across the state, who can adapt it even further to their local context. I've been amazed at the many connections teachers can easily build in such a small state and hope to leverage my local networks to help share these resources with other Grade 3 teachers and their students.

It is critical to note that Maine is a very racially homogenous state. The most recent estimate for 2019 is a population that is 93% White (US Census Bureau, 2019). While I do teach many White students in Lewiston, this does not tell the full story of my classroom. Lewiston has become home to many African immigrant and refugee families in the last two decades, and my classroom reflects this racial, cultural, and linguistic

diversity. In my previous year of teaching, approximately two-thirds of my students were White, many with generations of Franco-American heritage; a few students were multiracial; and about a quarter were students whose parents immigrated from Somalia, Kenya, or the Congo just a few years before or after they were born. I have not yet met a self-identified Wabanaki family in Lewiston, which underscores the importance of ensuring that my students are knowledgeable about and equipped to contribute towards the inclusion and integration of indigenous people in Maine even if they haven't yet met anyone from this group. This diversity also emphasizes the importance of utilizing Culturally Relevant Teaching practices to promote academic success and inclusion for all minoritized populations, not just Wabanaki peoples.

I purposefully chose to create a curricular unit in which the content and the pedagogy are both suited to this specific place and time. Rather than creating a curricular unit with sweeping generalizations and big ideas that could be utilized in any American public elementary education context, I actively chose the stance that highly localized curriculum designed with this unique context and its history, geography, peoples, and cultures in mind is more likely to have a meaningful impact than a *universal* Social Studies curriculum that is ignorant of the local indigenous peoples the curriculum seeks to validate, celebrate, and integrate. Unless stakeholders at the local level work together to achieve meaningful social change through thoughtful, multicultural curriculum in this local context, who will?

Curriculum Components

As a local, interdisciplinary Social Studies unit informed by multicultural, culturally responsive instructional approaches, this unit is intended to expand beyond the

realm of a packaged, one-size-fits-all, universal curriculum. Based on the review of the literature, curriculum is understood to consist of both content and pedagogy, or instructional approaches. Curriculum is also understood as just one component of educational discourse as a whole. Educational discourse is determined by teacher preparation and attitudes, institutional policies, school climate, materials, and content and pedagogy, which all interact in complex ways to produce the realities of American education, as it is experienced by students (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Curriculum is just one element in the equation, but it has the potential to be one of the most meaningful and efficient ways to promote education for social reconstruction because it sparks a conversation, is easily shared and distributed, and provides a shared experience and reference point for teachers, students, and community members. By building a curricular unit with both highly localized content and culturally responsive pedagogy, my intention was to help push the impact beyond the actual curriculum itself into local educational discourse and eventually, achieve meaningful reconstruction and and reimagined integration of social realities for Native and non-Native peoples.

The curricular unit consists of a framework of guiding questions and activities that support authentic, collaborative, student-centered inquiry about this land and the various groups that have called it home for thousands of years. This Maine Studies unit was intended to be adapted for appropriate use within the authentic life of the Grade 3 classroom, according to teacher preferences, schedule limitations, and of course, the unique needs of the students being served. The unit promotes interdisciplinary Social Studies learning by incorporating tools from other subject areas such as English Language Arts, Math, Art, and Social Emotional Learning, and suggests engaging with

and learning from Wabanaki community members and institutions, whenever possible. The curriculum provides a variety of guidelines and activities for meaningful, authentic, student-centered learning by integrating content and pedagogy to teach multicultural Social Studies knowledge and skills through a variety of instructional strategies, not by simply using Wabanaki cultural knowledge as content while relying on traditional Western pedagogy.

As a component of both content and pedagogy, assessment is an essential area in which the curricular design demonstrates its commitment to multicultural, culturally responsive Social Studies instruction. As demonstrated in the review of the literature, traditional assessment methods are cultural events that often do not accurately reflect the full reality of the learning that is happening within the educational context. In addition, the push toward standardized assessment in English Language Arts, Math, and Science has devalued Social Studies because it is inherently more difficult to assess.

Based on the review of the literature, Social Studies instruction that genuinely achieves both content and civic competence goals for all students must actively reject standardized assessment practices because its success is dependent on multiple perspectives, critical thinking, problem solving, inquiry, skills and attitudes, and community contexts--all of which purposefully defy standardization. Additionally, based on the review of the literature, successful multicultural, culturally responsive education, particularly for Native students, requires significant rethinking of everything from content and materials to pedagogy and assessment methods.

Because of these important considerations affecting assessment practices, I used a wide range of assessment methods from collaborative group projects and community

problem-solving to hands-on, integrated, authentic assessment that is embedded in instruction in unobtrusive ways. I used group discussion, self-reflection, and storytelling in meaningful ways to promote student awareness of achievement in the areas of content knowledge and civic competence. Given that civic competence skills such as inclusive attitudes and democratic values are especially difficult to assess, beginning-of-unit and end-of-unit performance tasks help provide a way to measure how students of all backgrounds grow in both their content knowledge mastery and civic competencies.

Finally, I created a teacher's guide to the curriculum in order to promote the ability of the curriculum to help shift educational discourse towards equity, inclusion, and integration. While curriculum does consist of content, materials, and instructional methods, curriculum only gains meaning when it is brought to life in the complex matrix of real-life relationships between teachers and students who have all been molded and shaped by a variety of life experiences in a particular time and place, under particular political, social, cultural, and economic conditions. By being explicit about the bigger picture of social reconstruction and inclusion that the curriculum seeks to achieve within the larger realm of educational discourse and societal realities, I created a curriculum that promotes awareness in all of its stakeholders of the larger educational and social context in which it is situated.

I also used the teacher's guide to help teachers to examine their own beliefs about education and society. Promoting a more holistic teacher understanding of the curriculum as being much bigger than content, materials, and instructional methods helps address factors such as teacher beliefs, attitude, and biases that can often have a negative effect on academic achievement for minoritized students. My hope is that the teacher's guide

will help teachers better understand the research that informed the development of the unit itself, as well as the ways that the unit teaches students new content but is intentionally grounded in a culturally responsive pedagogical approach. Helping teachers conceptualize this curriculum as a living, breathing practice or dialogue within the community, not just a script to be used in the classroom, increases its potential to contribute to meaningful social change within local contexts.

Project Assessment

Due to the intended impact of this project, it was critical to assess the ability of the curricular unit to answer the capstone question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* The review of the literature provided an essential base of knowledge to answer this question by providing new insights in three areas: instruction to develop Social Studies content knowledge, multicultural educational approaches to demonstrate value for all students and communities, and critical considerations for teaching about, for, and with AI/AN communities.

To consistently maintain focus on the wisdom gained from the review of the literature in each of these three areas, I designed a lesson plan template with a checklist of essential insights from each of the eight subtopics. When I created each lesson plan, I reflected on how each of the eight areas of wisdom reviewed in the literature directly informed and contributed to the individual lesson plan. This encouraged me to keep those insights at the forefront of my mind during the curricular design process while also assessing the curricular unit's ability to engage with these goals in a balanced, holistic way without omitting or overlooking any element of the capstone question. Reflecting on

the coverage of various subtopics within the curricular unit helped me assess my progress in developing a deeper, more meaningful alignment between the capstone question, the review of the literature, and the curricular unit itself.

Project Timeline

The review of the literature regarding the capstone question was completed in Spring 2019. The unit's overarching essential questions and a lesson plan template were completed by late June 2020. The curricular content and teacher's guide were created in July 2020. Chapter 4 was written in late July 2020 to reflect on the project as a whole and further contextualize it within United States public education and society. The capstone project concluded with a presentation to a group of peers and distribution to local Maine colleagues in early August 2020.

Summary

Above all, this Maine Studies curricular unit is intended to be flexible, adaptable, and responsive to individual and collective student needs within established wisdom about what constitutes culturally responsive, high-quality, interdisciplinary Social Studies education. Curriculum is not static and cannot exist on its own without the many stakeholders who bring it to life, just as people collectively bring meaning to and establish community within a physical location like current-day Maine over the course of thousands of years. The curricular materials I produced will only be as beneficial as how they are adapted for meaningful use in real educational contexts here in my local community.

I envision this curricular unit as a dynamic document that can be the start of a local conversation about equity, social reconstruction, and integration of Wabanaki

peoples. I have to trust that my own ethical considerations for promoting the authentic inclusion and integration of Wabanaki peoples without relying on harmful stereotypes or historicized cultural knowledge will be carried on with fidelity by other educators who also care deeply about authentic, culturally responsive education for educational success and meaningful social change.

This chapter described the project inspired by the capstone question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* This chapter provided justification for using a variety of frameworks to inform the curricular unit design in order to balance multiple perspectives within educational discourse and achieve improved outcomes for student success. The context and intended audience was established as diverse students within Grade 3 classrooms in the current-day state of Maine. The essential components of the curricular unit were outlined, followed by an explanation of assessment methods for measuring the project's success in meeting its intended goals and the timeline for project completion.

In the final chapter, reflections are offered to demonstrate the learning sparked by the capstone question, the review of the literature, and the curricular unit project itself. Policy implications and possible limitations are explored. Directions for future research are proposed for the field of Social Studies curricular design to further connect the fields of Social Studies education, multicultural education, and American Indian/Alaska Native education for the benefit of all students.

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

Introduction

This project focused on the capstone question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* This question prompted in-depth investigation into the ways that curriculum can be adapted and utilized for the purposes of social reconstruction within a particular societal context. After reflecting on the needs within my teaching context and completing a review of the literature, I developed a curricular unit for grade 3 with the intention of redefining the way that students think about the current-day state of Maine and the different groups of people who call it home, with a particular integrative focus on the Wabanaki nations as Maine's original caretakers.

In this chapter, I share insights from my own experience as a learner throughout this project. I highlight learning from the review of the literature that was especially important to the development of the curricular unit. I describe possible implications and limitations that may have constrained the project. I propose future directions for this work, plan to share the curricular unit with others, and envision the benefits this project provides for the teaching profession.

Important Insights

This capstone project has catalyzed a considerable amount of learning for me, both as a teacher and as a new community member. I started this project as someone who had moved to current-day Maine less than a year ago. I was still learning basic information about my own school and town, let alone an in-depth history of the state and its people. Conducting the literature review and researching previously unfamiliar content about Maine was incredibly eye-opening for me.

I felt a growing awareness of significant changes happening within me. As I gained knowledge from multiple perspectives and my understanding of current-day Maine became more complete, I was genuinely engaged in the learning experience. It is practically impossible to avoid getting excited about the incredible 13,000 year story of human life in this place, or the inventive, beautiful, and practical technologies that develop over time and closely connect people and their lifeways to a place and its physical features. The curriculum development process reminded me that I am and will always be both teacher and learner, and that genuine emotions like curiosity and excitement must drive the process of learning more about our world.

But as my capstone question suggests, knowledge acquisition is not the only dimension of change that I experienced. I could tell that my attitudes and beliefs as a teacher and community member also grew. The more complete my understanding of the full truth of current-day Maine became, the more I could sense my own attitudes and beliefs expanding. Learning even the most basic information about the Wabanaki helped me develop a greater concern and investment in this community and in the life of this current-day state as a whole. As I worked on the curricular unit I felt only more and more committed to making sure that all students would have access to this same opportunity

for growth that I myself experienced. My hope is that students in classrooms that utilize this curricular unit will feel empowered to contribute towards a more integrated, inclusive society in current-day Maine for all people, just as I did as the teacher who created it.

This capstone project has also helped me as an educator because it has reminded me that I cannot let fear of making mistakes limit what I attempt to achieve in my work as a teacher. I sincerely believe that the social reconstruction goals of this curricular unit are of critical importance. Maine is the Whitest state in the United States, and many Mainers don't even realize that there are indigenous people still very much present and making contributions within their tribal communities as well as within current-day Maine. I knew that there was a lot of opportunity to build student knowledge and inclusive attitudes towards the Wabanaki, but I often felt apprehensive that I would commit many of the same unacceptable, insensitive errors that others have committed for far too long.

I also felt overwhelmed at the sheer volume of disjointed information available about the Wabanaki and about Maine history in general. It was hard to envision how I could possibly translate all of that into a curricular unit for grade 3 students. I felt a huge sense of responsibility to include as much information as possible in order to do justice to this topic and to this group that has been marginalized and minoritized for centuries. Ultimately, the process of creating the curricular unit forced me to face my fears and dive in with a growth mindset, ready to do the best I know how to do as an educator at this moment in time. This project helped remind me that teaching and learning will always be an iterative work in progress, where teachers and students (and maybe even societies!) can learn from their mistakes.

Important Learnings from the Literature Review

My review of the literature within various disciplines underscored the importance of carefully balancing many different priorities in order to develop a meaningful and effective curricular unit. First, my review of the Social Studies education literature revealed that Social Studies instruction must intentionally develop both knowledge and civic competence, as one cannot exist without the other. Additionally, gaining a better understanding of the many obstacles limiting elementary Social Studies instruction helped me think in more thematic, interdisciplinary ways. On a deeper level, thinking about curriculum more subjectively helped me to conceptualize my curricular unit as a malleable guide, subject to interpretation and adaptation by other teachers in different Maine contexts, rather than a formula to be followed. Finally, learning about the sheer variety of Social Studies instructional methods inspired me to be creative in designing activities where content would be presented in engaging, thought-provoking ways.

My review of the multicultural education literature emphasized a holistic approach to understanding the function of education in society. Understanding that education is both a product of the society in which it is created *and* has the potential to change that society gives me as an educator and curriculum developer a stronger sense of purpose for why this was a worthwhile project. I more deeply considered the importance of understanding elements of education as highly variable social, political, and cultural constructions, subject to adaptation and reinterpretation by teachers, students, and other stakeholders alike. I utilized new learning about Culturally Responsive Teaching (Grant & Gillespie, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2006) to envision more inclusive, validating, and empowering conceptions of the fundamental elements of teaching and learning.

Finally, the review of the literature regarding American Indian/Alaska Native education was critically important for the development of this curricular unit. I would not have had even a remote possibility of successfully completing this project without a deeper understanding of a critical interpretation of history, including the stories of the centuries of oppression, genocide, land seizure, and exclusion suffered by indigenous communities in the current-day United States. Learning about Culture-Based Education reinforced my beliefs in designing constructivist, relevant, and thematic lessons to help develop positive self-concept and academic success simultaneously. I hope that my improved understanding of the unique history and needs of this racially minoritized, politically sovereign group was articulated in the curricular unit and the way that I framed important concepts. I hope this will challenge other teachers to examine their personal beliefs, grow in their desire to be more fully informed, and increase their capacity to engage in culturally responsive teaching practices when working with and teaching about indigenous communities.

Land education, as presented by Calderón (2014), was perhaps the single most influential source from the entire review of the literature. It was a completely new approach that I had never heard of before, yet it related to all three subtopics through the theme of decolonization. Land education seeks to recognize indigeneity and confront settler colonialism so that Western power and capitalistic understanding of land is no longer at the expense of indigenous peoples. Land education seeks to actively create a more equitable society by disrupting and decolonizing the dominant narrative and helping all people construct a more sustainable relationship to place.

Ironically, my capstone question revolved around attitudes and beliefs about people, but land ended up being the lens through which I envisioned that social reconstruction could be achieved. Current-day Maine is a geopolitical construct, which means that this chunk of landmass is branded as a particular kind of place through the interactions and beliefs of the diverse people who live within those constructed boundaries. Ultimately, the powerful ideas from land education challenged me to examine my foundational beliefs and create a framework of questions in an attempt to center the land itself and the validity of the indigenous experience, not just the colonizer perspective. Thinking through a decolonized understanding of identity and inclusion that is quite literally *grounded* in a particular place felt like a much more meaningful way to start to change harmful attitudes and beliefs. I hadn't anticipated the philosophy behind land education becoming so important to this project, but I now understand that decolonizing work was critical for how my thinking grew and how the curricular unit itself took shape.

Implications

As mentioned in Chapter Three, this project is inspired and supported by LD291, a Maine law passed in 2001 that requires teaching about Maine Native American history and culture at all levels of K-12 public education. Unfortunately, there are many obstacles preventing this law from being implemented to its full potential, many of which I experienced as a new teacher. There was no standardized elementary Social Studies curriculum provided by the state. I was excited to know that the state was invested in this worthy pursuit but soon became very frustrated by the inconsistent, scattered, and often biased nature of the curricular materials that I found, most of which were also based in a

traditional teacher-centered pedagogical approach. I knew that there needed to be better alignment between my content knowledge and my pedagogical content knowledge in order to do justice to this educational mandate.

My hope is that this curricular unit will be useful to other Grade 3 teachers around the state because it combines the best practices of Social Studies instruction with a more inclusive, localized, student-centered approach to learning about current-day Maine and its original peoples. I hope that it will be adapted and repurposed by diverse teachers for diverse classroom contexts around Maine. I also hope that it can inspire other teachers to take initiative to develop and share curricular materials based in a decolonizing land education approach that centers and affirms indigeneity, as developed by Calderón (2014). Paradoxically, I don't think that mandatory, standardized Social Studies curriculum should be a policy goal to support LD291 because it would defy the core beliefs of multicultural education, Culturally Responsive Education, Culture-Based Education, and even Social Studies as a discipline that resists standardization. I would never want this curricular unit to be used as mandatory curriculum, but I would love for it to be provided as one of many tools that can be adapted to authentically empower teachers and students to build knowledge, increase inclusion, and redefine current-day Maine.

Limitations

Time was a significant limitation for me in completing this capstone project. I would have preferred to include more lessons overall, especially lessons that would teach students about various elements of Wabanaki cultures, from more visible traditions like dance to less visible traditions like values around family relations. I found that there were

a wealth of online lesson plans about Wabanaki cultures, but not really many related to developing a more holistic understanding of connection and continuity between land, people, lifeways, and power. Ultimately, I simply needed to prioritize my time, and I felt that focusing on the latter approach would be more productive and groundbreaking for teachers and students around the state.

I also deeply regret that I did not directly consult with any members of the Native American community in Maine during the process of working on this project. I'm new to the state and don't know many people here, so I imagine that I will have more opportunities to do so in the future as I build a larger network in the education field. I am certain that the integrity and accuracy of the unit would have grown enormously from being reviewed by multiple members of Wabanaki communities, although the tribal leaders are overly burdened with this work as it is and deserve to be remunerated for their efforts, as they are valued! I had also planned to visit the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor and was not able to go due to time constraints, despite the incredible generosity of the curator in offering to host me even though the museum was closed to the public during Summer 2020. I purposefully integrated multiple Wabanaki perspectives in the unit by consulting many different types of online and print resources created by Wabanaki tribes and the state Wabanaki Studies Commission, but this in no way replaces the importance of ongoing dialogue and learning in person. My own perspective is just one single perspective as a White educator new to this context, but there are many more important perspectives that deserve to be centered in this type of work. I plan for my own inquiry and growth as a teacher/learner in this area to be open-ended and ongoing.

Future Directions

Creating this curricular unit makes me better prepared to teach elementary students Social Studies, in general, and Wabanaki Studies, in particular. I am certain that I have a better understanding of Social Studies unit design and how to think about overarching questions that can be used to develop student-centered, conceptual understanding. I am also confident that I have gained much more content knowledge about Wabanaki peoples and that my own attitudes and beliefs have become more integrative and inclusive, just as I hope will happen for students. I envision future Social Studies units focused on big questions regarding culture and the environment as ways to incorporate Wabanaki Studies. Modeling how Wabanaki Studies as a critical perspective can and should be integrated into Social Studies learning in general helps to demonstrate a vision for how that shift could start to happen in society in general.

This experience also helps me feel equipped to actively seek out ways to continue to integrate Wabanaki Studies into all elements of the curriculum, not just as a formal Social Studies unit. For example, I'd love to do basket-weaving in math class, oral storytelling for reading time, and seasonal outdoor activities in science. After creating this unit, I am now aware of where to find reliable resources and will be much more likely to seek out Wabanaki sources and voices in a more integrative way. I also have a growth mindset about how my own teaching and learning will continue to develop in this area over time.

Communication of Results

Though this unit will be incredibly useful to me in my own teaching practice, it was created with the goal of being shared with others. I plan to share this unit with my Grade 3 team at my school and my district leadership so that it can be shared with other

grade 3 teachers around the district. I also plan to share the curricular unit with the Social Studies content specialist for the Maine Department of Education, who was kind enough to talk with me when I was at the very early stages of planning this project when I first moved to Maine. Finally, I plan to share this project with other groups of educators focused on decolonizing work, particularly in the Portland School District. I plan to conduct informal surveys and interviews to solicit feedback from other educators and stakeholders, which I can then use to improve the curricular unit materials themselves as well as my teaching practice in general.

Benefits to Profession

I believe that this unit fills a critical need for Social Studies education in current-day Maine. As a new teacher, I was excited to do my part to ensure that Maine Native Americans were taught about and their perspective included in my Social Studies instruction, in accordance with LD291. My hope is that this curricular unit represents a truly different way of thinking about Social Studies instruction in this specific context that will help challenge other teachers. Maine Studies should provide plentiful opportunities for students to engage with big questions and meaningful activities that help develop a strong sense of self-identity and purpose in the world. Additionally, Wabanaki Studies should not be treated as a separate topic within Social Studies and should not gloss over painful chapters of history or treat indigenous people as unchanging--it should be authentic, respectful, relevant, and integrative. My vision is that this curricular unit benefits the profession by challenging teachers to examine their foundational beliefs about education and society at large, pushing them to be more integrative both in their own thinking and in their instruction.

Conclusion

In this final chapter, I shared insights from my own experience as a learner throughout this project. I highlighted important learning from the review of the literature that was especially critical to the development of the curricular unit, particularly the decolonization work of land education. I described possible policy implications alongside limitations of time and perspective that may have constrained the project. I proposed future directions for expanding my work and sharing the curricular unit more widely with the goal of benefitting the teaching profession as a whole.

I now reconsider my capstone question, *how can a Social Studies curricular unit help Grade 3 students increase knowledge about and integration of indigenous peoples in Maine?* I do not yet know what the full impact of this curricular unit will be, but I am certain it is a worthy cause. As Almeida (1996) wrote, "By weaving the concept of shared human experience and cultural diversity into all aspects of the curriculum, the current generation of U.S. teachers and students *could be* the last one to struggle against the racism and prejudice that have plagued Native Americans and weakened the fabric of American culture" (p. 6, emphasis added). Why wouldn't I want to contribute towards achieving that valuable goal, centuries in the making, and help turn it into a reality?

I may never know the true impact of my work within my community, yet I am confident that completing this project has cultivated significant learning and growth for me as a teacher. I have a much deeper understanding of the complex history and diversity of current-day Maine, and because of this I am even more assured in my conviction that we must collectively work toward decolonizing, integrating, and reconstructing relationships between people and place in this local context. Simply put, my own

conception of Maine has already been redefined through my work to explore this capstone question and craft a curricular unit for Grade 3 students in Maine. My hope is that the unit I've created will help other teachers and students become similarly engaged and challenged to grow as fellow learners and citizens in this unique land we are so lucky to call home.

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